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ABSTRACT

This technical assistance manual contains guidelines for paraeducator roles, supervision, and skill and knowledge competency standards on which policymakers and implementers can build to improve the effectiveness of teacher/provider-paraeducator teams. The guidelines and standards were developed by a project of national significance funded by the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education. Specific sections address: (1) guiding principles of paraeducator employment roles, preparation, and supervision; (2) the need for paraeducator utilization and preparation guidelines; (3) factors creating a critical need for the development and implementation of standards for paraeducator roles, responsibilities, skill and knowledge competencies, and supervision; (4) distinctions in teacher/provider and paraeducator team roles; (5) scope of teacher/provider responsibilities for paraeducator supervision; (6) standards for teacher/provider supervisory competencies; (7) paraeducator scope of responsibilities and skill standards; (8) scope of responsibilities for paraeducators in program implementation teams; (9) standards for paraeducator knowledge and skill competencies; (10) job descriptions for paraeducators; (11) assessing teacher/provider-paraeducator team performance; (12) teacher performance indicators; (13) paraeducator performance indicators; (14) developing the policies and infrastructures for strengthening teacher/provider-paraeducator teams; (15) credentialing procedures for paraeducators; and (16) the role of higher education in paraeducator preparation. (Contains 38 references.) (CR)

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Anne Lou Pickett

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS IN EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES
CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDY IN EDUCATION
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CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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I - INTRODUCTION

Paraeducators became an integral new part of the American workforce not by accident, but because of huge movements and needs in our culture. With the growth in their utilization has come the imperative for standards relating to their employment.

During the latter half of the 20th Century, dramatic changes occurred in our nation's economy, demographics, and medical and health care systems that had a profound impact on education policies, practices, and infrastructures. We completed our passage through the industrial/manufacturing era and entered the age of "high tech," computers, and a service-driven economy. Our population moved from small towns and family farms to major urban centers and from there into the suburbs. Increasing numbers of new immigrants created a multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual society. Advances in medical science and health care systems enabled more infants who have disabilities and life-threatening health care needs to survive and thrive. But despite a booming economy that led to higher standards of living for many families and improved education opportunities for their children, the numbers of children and youth who live in poverty and do not have access to quality health care are growing.

In addition to these events, a shortage in the ranks of teachers and related services providers that began after World War II has persisted. Currently there are critical shortages of qualified special education teachers and early childhood specialists. The shortfalls cross other programmatic lines as well. They are particularly acute in center cities, rural areas, and among personnel who represent diverse racial and language minority heritages.

In response to these events and trends, schools and other education service provider systems are changing and innovating. Across the country, policymakers in State and local education agencies, administrators, principals, teachers, and parents are working together to achieve higher learning and performance standards for all children and youth. Their efforts center on finding more effective ways to serve increasing numbers of learners of all ages who can benefit from individualized programs and personalized attention. They include children and youth who have learning, developmental, emotional, physical, and sensory disabilities, those who come from homes where English is the second language, and still others who are at risk because they come from economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Need for Standards

While State education agencies, local school districts, early childhood education, and other provider agencies are increasingly relying on teacher/provider and paraeducator teams to expand the availability of individualized education and related services for learners, they rarely have established standards for paraeducator roles, supervision, or preparation. Nor do most States have guidelines for preparing teachers/providers for their emerging roles as directors and monitors of paraeducator performance.

This technical assistance manual contains guidelines for paraeducator roles, supervision, and skill and knowledge competency standards on which policymakers and implementors can build to improve the effectiveness of teacher/provider-paraeducator teams. The guidelines and

standards were developed and validated by a project of national significance funded by the Division of Personnel Preparation, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) of the United States Department of Education. The project goals were designed to enable us to address similarities in the roles and responsibilities of teacher/provider and paraeducator teams who work in virtually all programs administered by public schools nationwide including inclusive general and special education, multi-lingual/ESL, Title I and other compensatory/remedial programs as well as early intervention/childhood programs.

In addition to this manual, the project also produced an annotated bibliography and a monograph describing paraeducator training models that have been tested and proven effective. The bibliography contains information about training resources, career development issues, administrative and management policies and issues, and current research connected with paraeducator utilization, supervision, and preparation. Both the bibliography and monograph are available on the web site of the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals. The web site is: **http://web.gc.cuny.edu/dept/case/nrcp**

II - ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff of the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services could not have accomplished the goals of this project without the help and support of many individuals. Members of a Project Taskforce assisted us in so many ways that it is impossible to list all of their contributions. They generously shared information and insight based on their experiences and understanding of the broad range of issues that impact on the performance of teacher/provider-paraeducator teams. They did yeoman service in helping us develop and refine the teacher/provider and paraeducator scopes of responsibilities. This was not an easy task since we were breaking new ground. They also helped us to identify the competencies that teachers need to supervise paraeducators, and to establish the knowledge and skills that paraeducators need to work in different position levels and programs. While it may sound trite, we could not have done it without them. They are: Len Albright from the Department of Occupational Studies at California State University, Long Beach; Arlene Barresi, paraeducator, Eastern Suffolk Board of Cooperative Education Services, New York; Joan Matheson, the representative of the National Education Association (NEA); Kent Gerlach, School of Education, Pacific Lutheran University/Tacoma, Washington; Ron Guyer, Ontario School District, Oregon; Nancy French, University of Colorado-Denver; Thomas Longhurst, Department of Speech Pathology, Idaho State University; Phyllis Kelly, Kansas State Department of Education; Richard Mainzer, Council for Exceptional Children (CEC); Marilyn Likens, Utah State University; Marion Ceasar, former paraeducator and representative of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT); Beth Ryberg, parent, Heartland AEA11, Iowa; Barbara Jo Stahl, Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning; Nancy Striffler, Child Development Center, Georgetown University; Richard White, Department of Counseling and Special Education, University of North Carolina-Charlotte; Susan Simon, Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Jo Thomason, Council of Administrators in Special Education, CEC. While they were not members of the Task Force, Nesa Chappelle of the NEA and Tish Olshefski of the AFT were always available to answer questions and provide invaluable council. Teri Wallace from the University Affiliated Program of Minnesota, Richard Herriges of the Minnesota Federation of Teachers and Joy Markowitz, Project FORUM, located at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education also made important contributions to the development of the guidelines.

I especially want to thank the more than 400 paraeducators, teachers, principals, State and local education personnel, faculty at two- and four-year institutions of higher education, parents, and representatives of professional organizations representing different disciplines who responded to the validation survey we conducted as part of the work of the project. Their evaluation of the proposed guidelines for teacher/provider and paraeducator scopes of responsibilities and the standards for paraeducator preparation reassured us that our efforts were on target and will serve as resources for different service delivery systems, personnel development programs, and general and special education, multilingual, Title I, and other compensatory/remedial programs as well as home- and center-based early childhood programs.

I will never be able to adequately express my gratitude to Peggy Hayden and Andy Humm for their contributions to all components of the project. Peggy facilitated three meetings of the taskforce whose members represented different disciplines, different provider systems,

different personnel development institutions, parents, unions, and paraeducators. Her professionalism, humor, and organizational/facilitation skills enabled us to accomplish our objectives. Andy did everything from a literature review to preparing an annotated bibliography to editing this manual to making meeting arrangements.

Charlotte Fisk and Richard Bruce provided word processing services, entered the results of the survey into our data bank (including the responses to open-ended questions that, in some cases, were quite lengthy), and designed the format for this report. Both of them maintained their sense of humor throughout this process – which was not always easy.

And finally, I want to recognize the work of thousands of teacher/provider and paraeducator teams who work in schools and other learning environments nationwide. They make a difference in the lives of all the learners and the parents whom they serve every day.

Anna Lou Pickett
Project Director
National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals

III - DEFINING THE TERMS

In this report we use several terms that may not be exactly the same as those used in your State or local education agency (SEA/LEA) or other education provider agencies that serve children and youth of different ages, who have different ability levels, and who come from diverse cultural and language minority heritages and family backgrounds. To assist you, the terms are defined here.

PARAEDUCATORS are school/ agency employees 1) whose positions are either instructional in nature or who provide other direct services to children and youth and/or their families; and 2) who work under the supervision of teachers or other professional practitioners who are responsible for a) the design, implementation, and assessment of learner progress, and b) the evaluation of the effectiveness of learning programs and related services for children and youth and/or their families (Pickett, 1989). Other titles used to identify these employees may include: paraprofessional, teacher aide/assistant, education technician, transition trainer, job coach, therapy assistant, home visitor, and many others.

LEARNER refers to school-age students, infants, and young children served in home- and center-based programs. It is used interchangeably with child, youth, and student.

AGENCY designates early childhood service provider systems including home-based programs for infants and toddlers, Head Start, and other pre-school education programs.

PROVIDER encompasses early childhood specialists who plan and provide learning experiences for infants, toddlers, and young children, and/or related services personnel from other disciplines including: speech language pathologists, physical and occupational therapists, nurses, and transition specialists.

FAMILY includes parents and other adults who may have legal responsibility for a child's care and well-being.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES are statements of beliefs that provide a philosophical framework on which SEAs, LEAs, and other agencies can build to ensure appropriate team roles, supervision, and professional development and respect for paraeducators.

STANDARDS are statements that describe job functions/tasks that are related to competency areas established for an occupation. The standards include performance indicators and the skills and knowledge required to carry out tasks.

COMPETENCIES are specific skills and knowledge required for employment in various programs and position levels.

PROGRAM PLANNING TEAMS are responsible for developing individualized education plans (IEPs), individualized transition plans (ITPs), and individualized family service plans (IFSPs) for learners. Membership includes representatives from education and related services disciplines that are required to identify learner goals and plans to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities or other special needs. Team members may be general and special education teachers, early childhood educators, families, occupational and physical therapists (OTs/PTs), speech language pathologists (SLPs), psychologists, social workers, administrators, physicians, nurses, transition specialists, paraeducators, and more. Team leadership may rotate or be assumed by a person representing the discipline with the primary

responsibility for achieving the goals and objectives of the individual learner.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS are much smaller and have day-to-day responsibility for providing education and other direct services to children/youth and their families. Program implementation teams are found in inclusive general and special education classrooms, Title I, multilingual/ESL, early childhood, and school- to-work/vocational preparation programs. A teacher, early childhood educator, transition specialist, or another provider who has the primary responsibility for developing, implementing and evaluating learning activities usually assumes team leadership. Typically, program implementation team members include but are not limited to early childhood or transition specialists, teachers, and paraeducators. Other staff who support learning activities or provide related services may also include OTs, PTs, SLPs, and nurses, however, these personnel rarely serve as leaders of program implementation teams.

PARAEDUCATOR MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

Responsibility for the management and supervision of paraeducators is divided into two components. The first is the roles and responsibilities of district level administrators, building principals, and agency/program directors. The second component is the supervisory roles and responsibilities of teachers/providers.

1. **Administrative personnel** in LEAs and other education provider agencies have operational responsibility for establishing and carrying out personnel practices connected with paraeducator employment, preparation, evaluation, and dismissal. This includes 1) developing paraeducator job descriptions and performance criteria, 2) determining placement, 3) assessing overall performance, 4) providing standardized, systematic opportunities for paraeducator professional development, and 5) ensuring that teachers/providers are aware of and prepared for their roles as supervisors of paraeducators.

2. **Teachers/providers** have responsibility for supervising and integrating paraeducators into learning environments. This includes 1) planning the tasks that paraeducators will carry out, 2) developing daily/weekly schedules for paraeducators, 3) appropriately delegating responsibilities to paraeducators, 4) monitoring the day-to-day performance of paraeducators, 5) providing feedback and on-the-job training to paraeducators, and 6) sharing relevant information about paraeducator strengths and training needs with principals or agency directors.

SCOPES OF RESPONSIBILITY AND SKILL STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS/ PROVIDERS AND PARAEDUCATORS

The scope of teacher/provider responsibilities targets their roles connected with the supervision and integration of paraeducators into program implementation teams. Neither the teacher/ provider scope of responsibilities nor their skill standards are designed to include all duties and functions performed by teachers/providers in the planning, delivery, and assessment of learning programs and other services. The paraeducator scope of responsibilities and the skill standards are designed for team members who work alongside teachers/providers in various programs and settings and assist them with achieving learning goals for children and youth. We have developed scopes of responsibilities for paraeducators working in three position levels, as well as skill and knowledge standards for each of the three levels.

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (IHE) refers to both community colleges and colleges or universities that provide undergraduate and graduate-level personnel preparation programs.

IV - GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PARAEDUCATOR EMPLOYMENT, ROLES, PREPARATION, AND SUPERVISION*

The eight guiding principles that were developed through the work of this project have four primary goals. They are to enable policymakers, implementers, and other stakeholders to:

- ✓ Create and/or strengthen policies and systems that impact on paraeducators roles, supervision, and preparation.
- ✓ Build the capacity of SEAs, LEAs, other human services/education systems, and IHEs to recruit, retain, and prepare a skilled committed paraeducator workforce.
- ✓ Assure that paraeducators are effectively supervised and appropriately integrated into program implementation and planning teams.
- ✓ Enhance the recognition of the value of skilled paraeducators as team members.

Guiding Principle 1: Skilled paraeducators are employed to improve the quality of education and services in other provider systems and to help ensure supportive, inclusive, safe, and healthy learning environments for children, youth, and staff.

Guiding Principle 2: Administrators and teachers/providers create environments that recognize paraeducators as valued team members and effectively integrate them into teams.

Guiding Principle 3: Members of all program planning and implementation teams participate within clearly defined roles in changing, dynamic environments to provide learner-centered and individualized experiences and services for all children and youth and their families.

Guiding Principle 4: Paraeducators are respected and supported in their team roles by policymakers, administrators, teachers/providers, and families.

Guiding Principle 5: Standards for paraeducator roles and professional development assure that they are assigned to positions for which they are qualified and have the skills required to assist teachers/providers to provide quality learning experiences and related services for all children and youth and their families.

Guiding Principle 6: Paraeducators receive pre- and inservice professional development provided by the district/agency and opportunities for continuing education or career advancement offered by institutions of higher education.

Guiding Principle 7: Teachers/providers responsible for supervising the work of paraeducators have the skills necessary to plan for, direct, provide on-the-job training for, monitor, and evaluate the performance of paraeducators.

Guiding Principle 8: Paraeducators have an occupational/professional identity and contribute to learner-centered activities that help to achieve the mission of the school/agency.

***These guiding principles are based on research activities conducted by the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals and paraeducator development efforts in Utah, Minnesota, Iowa, Washington, and Rhode Island.**

V - SETTING THE STAGE

Felice is the new coordinator of Human Resources and Personnel Development for a local school district. The district serves children and youth in various programs from birth through 21 depending on the individual's education and related services needs. One of her first calls is from Mark and Maria, the directors of Special Education and Related Services and Title I and Migrant Education Programs. Both of them have identified a critical need to prepare teachers/providers and paraeducators to work together more effectively as members of program implementation teams. Felice suggests that they meet to discuss their concerns.

During the meeting, she learns that neither Mark nor Maria have the staff or resources needed to develop and carry out systematic competency-based training for paraeducators. Moreover, while the district is committed to providing ongoing professional development for teachers/providers, opportunities for paraeducator training are not included in the program.

Mark and Maria share with Felice several other interrelated problems and issues, that have an impact on the performance of teacher/provider-paraeducator teams. For example, they have reviewed the district's job descriptions for paraeducators and were surprised to find that they have not been revised since the early 1970s and do not recognize the changes that have occurred in the tasks performed by paraeducators. They have also discovered that the language in the district's contract with teachers does not clearly define the supervisory responsibilities of teachers for directing and monitoring paraeducators. Further compounding the problem is the fact that teachers/providers are ill-prepared to plan for, direct, and monitor paraeducator performance.

Felice agrees to do some more in-depth research to identify resources at either the State or local levels they could build on or address some of these issues. Her first call is to a friend who is working on a taskforce that is responsible for drafting new standards for teacher preparation and licensure in different programs and grade levels. In response to her question about whether or not the new standards will recognize the emerging roles of teachers as supervisors of paraeducators, she was told: "That's an interesting question, but it is not one of our agenda items."

A second call to a contact in the SEA found that there are no statewide guidelines for paraeducator utilization, supervision, and preparation in any programs. In fact, the State leaves it up to the LEAs to develop and provide paraeducator training. Her contact does say, however, that the commissioner is beginning to assess the need for the State to take a more active role in addressing paraeducator issues that surround the employment and training of "teacher aides."

During her investigative efforts, Felice also discovered that the local community college offers an AA degree in early childhood education for paraeducators. Because of changes in IDEA, a second option may be developed for paraeducators working in home or center-based programs serving infants, young children, and their families. An AA degree program designed for paraeducators employed in elementary and special education programs was discontinued several years ago because it failed to attract enough students. When Felice asked why the

program was no longer in effect, she was told that the district's salary scale and the lack of a career ladder for paraeducators were barriers to recruiting paraeducators.

When Felice reported all of this to Mark and Maria, they were taken aback to learn that there were so few resources at either the State or district level to support their efforts to strengthen the performance of teacher/provider-paraeducator teams. Moreover they knew that it would be almost impossible for them to develop and implement an ongoing and effective training program for paraeducators without the assistance and support of other stakeholders. Their first question was: where do we go from here? The second was: how do we get there?

VI - FRAMING THE ISSUES

Over the last decade, several factors have converged to create a critical need for the development and implementation of standards for paraeducator roles, responsibilities, skill and knowledge competencies, and supervision. These factors include but are not limited to:

- Provisions in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997), the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1994, and the School to Work Act of 1994 have all increased demands for highly skilled personnel at all levels. Moreover, IDEA specifically requires States to ensure that paraeducators are appropriately trained and supervised and that proposed amendments to the ESEA of 1994 (scheduled for reauthorization in 2000) also target the need to establish guidelines for paraeducator utilization, preparation, and career development.

- Continuing initiatives to restructure education systems and practices to more effectively serve children and youth with disabilities and other special needs in inclusive learning environments (Mueller, 1997; Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselle & McFarland, 1997; Safarek in Gerlach & Pickett, 1997; Pickett, 1996).

- Increasing numbers of English language learners enrolled in school systems nationwide (RNT, 1997; Haselkorn & Fideler, 1996; Macais & Kelly, 1996; Pickett, 1995; McDonnell & Hill, 1993, NCES, 1995; Miromontes, 1990).

- Expanding efforts to improve the quality of education for learners in Title I and other programs serving children and youth from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

- Continuing and growing shortages of teachers in all programmatic areas (AAEE, 1998; RNT, Inc. 1997; Haselkorn & Fideler, 1996; National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996, Genzuk, Lavendez & Kachen, 1994; Genzuk and Baca, 1998).

- Changing and expanding roles of teachers and other providers as program managers and leaders of program implementation teams (French in Pickett & Gerlach, 1997; Longhurst in Pickett & Gerlach, 1997; Vasa & Steckelberg in Pickett & Gerlach, 1997).

All of the events and trends cited above have led to increased reliance on paraeducators with greater emphasis on their learner support roles. The most significant are probably the various initiatives to reshape and redefine teacher/provider roles. No matter whether they work in center- or home-based early childhood settings, elementary, middle, or high schools, general, compensatory, or special education programs, teacher/provider roles and responsibilities in the instructional process are similar. Teachers/providers are diagnosticians of learner needs, planners of age- and ability-appropriate lessons and instructional strategies, facilitators of learning, and assessors of learner performance.

CHANGING ROLES OF TEACHERS/PROVIDERS Starting with the publication of *Teachers for the 21 Century*, produced by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy in 1986, efforts to reform education practices have added new dimensions to traditionally recognized teacher/provider responsibilities. Increasingly, teachers/providers participate in school-based governance and decision-making. They help determine how best to allocate human and fiscal resources to meet learner needs, assist in aligning curriculum content and methods to meet higher standards for all learners, and, as members of education and related services planning teams, collaborate with other school/agency professionals and parents to develop IEP, ITP, IFSP goals and objectives for children and youth who have disabilities. They frequently are also the primary liaisons between homes and schools (David, 1996; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Friend & Cook, 1996; Villa, Thousand, Niven & Malgari, 1996; Diboer, 1995; French & Pickett, 1997; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997; Carnegie Forum, 1986).

CHANGING ROLES OF PARAEDUCATORS The roles and responsibilities of paraeducators have changed dramatically since they were introduced into classrooms almost five decades ago as aides to provide teachers with more time to plan and implement learning activities. The early efforts to test the efficacy of teacher aides limited their duties to performing routine monitoring and clerical tasks and maintaining learning environments (Ford Foundation, 1961; Gartner, 1971; Kaplan, 1977). With the advent of Title I, HeadStart, and other compensatory programs in the 1960s and 1970s and the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, an evolution in paraeducator roles began to take place.

In today's schools and other education provider agencies, paraeducator roles include:

- ✓ Instructing individual and small groups of learners using plans and strategies developed by teachers/providers.
- ✓ Documenting data about learner behavior and performance and participating in other learner assessment activities under the supervision of teachers/providers.
- ✓ Implementing teacher/provider-developed behavior management and disciplinary procedures.
- ✓ Preparing learner materials and maintaining learning centers.
- ✓ Assisting teachers/providers in efforts to involve families in their child's learning experiences (Moshoyannis, Pickett & Grannik, 1999; Mueller, 1997; Safarik, 1997; Passaro, Pickett, Lathem & HongBo, 1994; Snodgrass, 1991; Fenechel & Eggheer, 1990; Krajicek, Steinke, Hertzbergi, Anastasiow, & Sandall, 1997).

Until recently, policysetters and implementers at the Federal, State, and local levels have paid very little attention to the critical need to develop policies, systems, and infrastructures that will improve the performance and productivity of teacher/provider- paraeducator teams. Moreover, for the most part, personnel preparation programs at both the undergraduate and

graduate levels have not recognized the need to prepare teachers/providers for their emerging roles as supervisors of paraeducators.

Contrast this with what has happened in other disciplines such as occupational and physical therapy, speech-language pathology, law, and medicine. Each of these has recognized the value of differentiated staffing arrangements. As a result, they have: 1) defined distinctions in professional and paraprofessional roles and scopes of responsibility in the delivery of services, 2) determined supervisory responsibility, 3) developed knowledge and skill standards for paraprofessionals working in different position levels, and 4) recognized a continuum of professional development opportunities that facilitate career advancement for paraprofessionals (CEC Consortium, 1996; AOTA, 1990; APTA, 1995, ASHA, 1995).

If we truly believe that a well prepared, qualified education workforce is the key to enabling all children and youth to achieve higher learning and performance standards and to achieve their full potential, we cannot afford to overlook policy and systemic issues connected with paraeducator utilization and supervision. Nor can we allow budgetary concerns to serve as obstacles to developing and providing standardized, competency-based opportunities for professional and career development for paraeducators.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE To assist policymakers, administrators and personnel developers to address these policy questions and systemic issues, the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals (NRCP) was funded by the Division of Personnel Preparation in the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) of the USDE to develop guidelines and standards for paraeducator roles, supervision, skill and knowledge competencies, and preparation. Although the funding was provided by OSEP, the project goals enabled us to focus on and validate similarities in the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators working in all programs administered by LEAs and other education provider agencies.

The major project objectives were the development of:

- Scopes of responsibilities for teachers/providers as leaders of program implementation teams and supervisors of paraeducators.
- Scopes of responsibilities for different levels of paraeducator positions.
- Skills and knowledge required by teachers/providers to supervise and monitor the day-to-day performance of paraeducators.
- Skills and knowledge required by paraeducators assigned to different position levels and program areas.

To achieve the goals and objectives of the project, we convened a taskforce that represented SEAs, LEAs, two- and four-year IHEs, parents, paraeducators, professional organizations, and unions. The taskforce assisted with the development of guidelines for the scopes of responsibilities and standards for the knowledge and skill competencies for teachers/providers and paraeducators. To validate the proposed scopes of responsibilities and the

knowledge and skills, we conducted a nationwide mail survey. The survey was sent to a selected sample of approximately 700 individuals with experience and understanding of the issues connected with the employment, utilization, preparation, and retention of a skilled paraeducator workforce. More than 400 administrators in SEAs, LEAs, and other provider agencies, faculty in two- and four-year IHEs, teachers/providers, and paraeducators employed in a variety of programs, and parents returned the survey. Their responses provided us with information that we needed to finalize the scopes of responsibilities for teachers/providers and three different levels of paraeducator positions. The distinctions in the position levels are based on our analysis of the hierarchy of skill and knowledge competencies that are required to carry out paraeducator functions and tasks.

In addition to the scopes of responsibilities and the standards for knowledge and skill competencies for teachers/providers and paraeducators, we have also developed 1) indicators of skill mastery for teachers and paraeducators and 2) model job descriptions for three levels of paraeducator positions. The report concludes with suggested strategies for developing approaches for developing comprehensive systems of paraeducator preparation programs and opportunities for career advancement.

The scopes of responsibilities and skill standards are ideals, but they are achievable in the real world of today's schools and other education service provider agencies. It is our deepest hope that all those who care about quality education and service delivery for all children and youth will play a part in seeing to it that they have an impact at the State and local level.

VII - DISTINCTIONS IN TEACHER/PROVIDER AND PARAEDUCATOR TEAM ROLES

Increasingly, teachers/providers and paraeducators work together as members of program implementation teams. In many LEAs and other agencies, some paraeducators are also participants in program planning teams. Although it may appear to a casual visitor to various learning environments that the roles and functions of teachers/providers and paraeducators are almost the same, nothing could be further from the truth. While some of their duties may overlap, it is the responsibility of teachers/providers to diagnose learner needs, plan curriculum and learning activities, modify these activities to meet individual learners needs, and evaluate learner progress. Paraeducators work alongside their teacher/provider colleagues and carry out tasks that support the different teacher/provider functions. The problem confronting many teacher/provider-paraeducator teams is that all too frequently, distinctions in their roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined. The guidelines for scopes of responsibilities for teachers/providers and paraeducators developed by the project will serve as resources policymakers and administrators can build on to ensure that paraeducators are appropriately supervised and that they are assigned only the tasks that fall within the parameters of the position for which they are prepared.

The scope of responsibilities for teachers/providers and the knowledge and skill competencies are divided into six different theme areas that relate directly to their roles as leaders of program implementation teams who supervise paraeducators. The teacher/provider scope of responsibilities and knowledge and skill standards follow on the next pages.

As you begin to discuss and develop your own scopes of responsibilities for teachers/providers, we want to stress once again the distinctions in teacher/provider and administrator responsibilities in the management and supervision of paraeducators.

Administrative personnel in LEAs and other education provider agencies have operational responsibility for establishing and carrying out personnel practice connected with paraeducator employment, preparation, evaluation, and dismissal. This includes: 1) developing paraeducator job descriptions and performance criteria, 2) determining placement, 3) assessing overall performance, 4) providing standardized, systematic opportunities for paraeducator professional development, and 5) ensuring that teachers/providers are aware of and prepared for their roles as supervisors of paraeducators.

Teachers/providers have responsibility for supervising and integrating paraeducators into learning environments. This includes 1) planning the tasks that paraeducators will carry out, 2) developing daily/weekly schedules for paraeducators, 3) appropriately delegating responsibilities to paraeducators, 4) monitoring the day-to-day performance of paraeducators, 5) providing feedback and on-the-job training to paraeducators, and 6) sharing relevant information about paraeducator strengths and training needs with principals or agency directors.

VIII - SCOPE OF TEACHER/PROVIDER RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PARAEDUCATOR SUPERVISION

RESPONSIBILITY 1: TEACHERS/PROVIDERS ARE LEADERS OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS WITH SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY FOR PARAEDUCATORS.

The scope of responsibilities for teachers/providers as team leaders includes:

1. Participating on program planning teams (including families) to develop individualized programs for infants, young children, and school-age learners with disabilities and other special needs.

2. Preparing work assignments for paraeducators based on program needs, learning objectives for children and youth, and paraeducator skills.

3. Involving paraeducators in various components of the learning process to support teacher/provider management and program implementation functions.

4. Providing on-the-job training for and feedback to paraeducators to prepare them to carry out team decisions.

5. Sharing relevant information with principals/agency administrators and paraeducators about the strengths and professional development needs of an individual paraeducator.

RESPONSIBILITY 2: AS TEAM LEADERS, TEACHERS/PROVIDERS CREATE AND MAINTAIN LEARNER-CENTERED, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS.

The scope of responsibilities for teachers/providers in providing supportive, learner-centered environments includes:

1. Implementing, with the assistance of paraeducators, district/agency policies and procedures for protecting the safety, health, and well-being of learners and staff.

2. Involving families in their child's learning experiences.

3. Involving paraeducators in learning activities that provide supportive/inclusive learning environments that respect differences among children, youth, their families, and staff and protect their human and legal rights.

RESPONSIBILITY 3: AS TEAM LEADERS, TEACHERS/PROVIDERS PLAN AND ORGANIZE LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

The scope of responsibility for teachers/providers for developing, planning, and organizing learning experiences includes:

1. Utilizing long-term and short-term learning objectives developed by program planning teams (that include families) to plan learning experiences for individual and groups of children and youth.

2. Aligning, in cooperation with other team members, curriculum content with learning and performance standards established by the State.

3. Developing learning and behavioral plans to achieve learning objectives and performance standards.

4. Modifying learning plans, curriculum content, and instructional strategies to accommodate differences in individual children and youth.

5. Selecting adaptive equipment, assistive technology, and age/developmentally-appropriate instructional materials needed to accommodate individual learner differences.

6. Involving paraeducators in planning and organizing learning experiences based on paraeducator qualifications to carry out the tasks.

RESPONSIBILITY 4: AS TEAM LEADERS, TEACHERS/PROVIDERS ENGAGE CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

The scope of responsibility for teachers/providers for ensuring that children and youth are actively engaged in learning experiences includes:

1. Providing, with the assistance of paraeducators, learning experiences for children and youth that take place in different environments (i.e. classrooms, libraries, study halls, playgrounds, worksites, and other community-based locations, and home- and center-based programs serving infants/young children and their families).

2. Preparing work assignments for paraeducators based on learning objectives, learning preferences/styles, and other characteristics of the individuals and/or groups that the paraeducator will assist.

3. Communicating information to paraeducators about how to use the methods, materials, and equipment required to carry out learning activities and how to document a learner's performance.

RESPONSIBILITY 5: AS TEAM LEADERS, TEACHERS/PROVIDERS ASSESS LEARNER NEEDS, PROGRESS, AND ACHIEVEMENTS.

The scope of responsibility for teachers/providers in the assessment process includes:

1. Participating in assessment activities that involve families in establishing eligibility for special services/programs.

2. Administering and analyzing, with the assistance of other team members, results of standardized (formal) instruments for assessing learner achievement.

3. Developing functional (informal) assessment tools to document individual learner and group strengths and learning needs.

4. Analyzing the results of functional (informal) assessment activities.

5. Keeping learner records required by Federal laws, State regulatory procedures, and district/agency policies.

6. Involving paraeducators in assessment and record-keeping activities for which they are prepared.

RESPONSIBILITY 6: AS TEAM LEADERS, TEACHERS/PROVIDERS PRACTICE STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL CONDUCT.

The scope of professional and ethical responsibilities for teachers/providers connected with the supervision, evaluation, and preparation of paraeducators includes:

1. Adhering to the ethical and professional standards of conduct related to the supervision and evaluation of paraeducators established by the professional organization representing their discipline and/or the district/agency/state.

2. Modeling standards of professional conduct for paraeducators (i.e., maintaining confidentiality and demonstrating respect for the human, civil, and legal rights of children, youth, and families).

3. Ensuring that paraeducators follow guidelines established by the district/agency to protect the health, safety, and well-being of children and youth.

4. Participating in opportunities for professional development that improve supervisory and team-building skills.

The standards for the knowledge and skills teachers/providers require to carry out these responsibilities follow on the next page.

XI - STANDARDS FOR TEACHER/PROVIDER SUPERVISORY COMPETENCIES

STANDARD 1: TO SERVE AS LEADERS OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS AND TO SUPERVISE PARAEDUCATORS, TEACHERS/PROVIDERS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL COMPETENCIES:

I. Knowledge competencies include an:

K1 Understanding of the value of a team approach in the delivery of services.

K2 Understanding of the distinctions in teacher/provider and administrator roles in the employment, management, supervision, evaluation, and preparation of paraeducators.

K3 Understanding of distinctions in the roles and responsibilities of teachers/providers and paraeducators.

K4 Awareness of the contributions that paraeducators make to increasing the availability of individualized learning experiences and services.

K5 Awareness of Federal and State laws and regulations and district/agency policies and practices that influence the employment, roles and responsibilities, supervision, and preparation of paraeducators.

K6 Understanding of the responsibilities of teachers/providers for supervising paraeducators in program implementation teams.

K7 Awareness of district/agency policies that may require paraeducators to participate in program planning teams.

K8 Awareness of interactive, problem-solving, and decision-making techniques that build and maintain effective program planning and program implementation teams.

II. Skill competencies include an:

S1 Ability to plan work assignments for paraeducators based on program requirements and learning objectives for individuals and groups.

S2 Ability to appropriately delegate tasks to paraeducators based on their qualifications to carry out an assignment.

S3 Ability to share information with paraeducators about their roles as members of program planning teams if required by district/agency policies, as well as the roles of other team members including families in the development of learner goals.

S4 Ability to monitor the day-to-day performance of paraeducators and to provide principals/agency administrators with relevant information about the strengths and professional development needs of paraeducators.

S5 Ability to provide systematic on-the-job training and mentoring to paraeducators.

STANDARD 2: TO ENSURE THAT PARAEDUCATORS CONTRIBUTE TO LEARNER-CENTERED, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS, TEACHERS/ PROVIDERS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

I. Knowledge competencies include an:

K1 Understanding of the contributions that paraeducators make to serving children and youth in supportive, learner-centered environments.

K2 Awareness of district/agency and/or State/local government policies and procedures for reporting suspected physical, sexual, and psychological child abuse.

K3 Awareness of effective strategies for involving families in all aspects of their child's learning experiences.

K4 Awareness of distinctions in teacher/provider and paraeducator responsibilities for sharing information with families about learner performance, and/or engaging families in their child's learning experiences.

II. Skill competencies include an:

S1 Ability to share and/or reinforce information with paraeducators about Federal, State, and local policies and procedures that ensure the safety, health, and well-being of learners and staff.

S2 Ability to plan paraeducator activities that help to maintain supportive learner-centered environments and protect the safety, health, and well-being of children, youth, and staff.

S3 Ability to appropriately involve paraeducators in activities that engage families in their child's learning experiences.

S4 Ability to model interactive skills that demonstrate respect for the views, rights, and contributions of children and youth, families, and school/agency personnel.

STANDARD 3: TO APPROPRIATELY INVOLVE PARAEDUCATORS IN ASSISTING WITH PLANNING AND ORGANIZING LEARNING EXPERIENCES, TEACHERS/PROVIDERS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

I. Knowledge competencies include an:

K1 Understanding of the distinctions in teacher/provider and paraeducator roles in diagnosing learning needs, modifying learning activities for individuals, and identifying appropriate materials, equipment, and technology systems.

K2 Understanding of how the life experiences of paraeducators who come from diverse cultural, ethnic, and language minority heritages may contribute to planning and organizing learning experiences and environments.

K3 Understanding of how paraeducator familiarity with the needs and circumstances of families whose children have disabilities or other special needs may contribute to planning and organizing learning experiences and environments.

II. Skill competencies include an:

S1 Ability to appropriately involve paraeducators in the planning of individualized learning experiences and organizing environments to promote learning.

STANDARD 4: TO APPROPRIATELY INVOLVE PARAEDUCATORS IN LEARNING EXPERIENCES, TEACHERS/PROVIDERS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

I. Knowledge competencies include an:

K1 Understanding of differences and similarities in teacher/provider and paraeducator roles and responsibilities in facilitating the learning process.

K2 Understanding of how different cultural heritages, ability/developmental levels, and other characteristics of children and youth impact their learning styles/preferences.

K3 Awareness of various learning strategies, materials, adaptive equipment, and assistive technologies that are required to meet the needs of individual children and youth.

II. Skill competencies include an:

S1 Ability to share information with paraeducators about characteristics and learning objectives for individual children and youth.

S2 Ability to provide on-the-job training to prepare paraeducators to follow learning plans developed by the teacher/provider and to use methods, materials, adaptive equipment, and assistive technology selected or developed by the teacher/provider.

STANDARD 5: TO APPROPRIATELY INVOLVE PARAEDUCATORS IN ASSESSING THE STRENGTHS AND LEARNING NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH, TEACHERS/PROVIDERS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

I. Knowledge competencies include an:

K1 Awareness of the distinctions among teacher/provider, other licensed district/agency professionals, and paraeducator roles and responsibilities in the assessment process.

K2 Understanding of the skills required by paraeducators to objectively gather information and report on the performance and achievements of individual children and youth.

K3 Awareness of district/agency policies and procedures for preparing and maintaining all learner records.

II. Skill competencies include an:

S1 Ability to appropriately involve paraeducators in administering standardized achievement tests based on State/district/agency policies, the protocol for conducting the tests, and the paraeducator's qualifications to carry out the task.

S2 Ability to provide on-the-job training to prepare paraeducators to use functional (informal) assessment tools and to objectively share relevant information about learner strengths and needs.

S3 Ability to prepare paraeducators to assist with record-keeping activities based on district/agency policies and procedures.

STANDARD 6: TO ENSURE THAT PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL STANDARDS CONNECTED WITH THE SUPERVISION OF PARAEDUCATORS ARE MET, TEACHERS/PROVIDERS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

I. Knowledge competencies include an:

K1 Awareness of the human, civil, and legal rights of all children and youth and their families and the responsibility of all district/agency staff for respecting and protecting these rights.

K2 Understanding of the ethical and professional standards of conduct established by the professional organization representing their discipline and/or the State/district/agency for the selection, supervision, assessment, and preparation of paraeducators.

K3 Understanding of appropriate roles and responsibilities for paraeducators in the learning process and delivery of other direct services to children, youth, and/or their families.

K4 Awareness of resources and opportunities for professional development to improve team leadership and supervisory skills of paraeducators.

II. Skill competencies include an:

S1 Ability to follow standards of professional and ethical conduct for the supervision, assessment, and preparation of paraeducators established by the professional organization representing their discipline and/or the State/district/agency.

S2 Ability to model standards of professional and ethical conduct for paraeducators (i.e., maintaining confidentiality, respecting rights of children, youth, and families, and demonstrating sensitivity to diversity in culture, ethnicity, family structure, learning styles, and abilities).

S5 Ability to evaluate one's own skills to improve paraeducator supervision.

X - PARAEDUCATOR SCOPES OF RESPONSIBILITIES & SKILL STANDARDS

The scopes of responsibility for paraeducators as members of program implementation teams are divided into the same six theme areas as those for teachers/providers. They are divided into three levels of positions as are the standards for paraeducator skill and knowledge competencies. Based on our analysis of the results of the validation survey, we have identified a common core of knowledge and skills required by all paraeducators. The common core of competencies serves as the basis for the scope of responsibilities for a level 1 paraeducator position. The scopes of responsibilities for the levels 2 and 3 paraeducator positions are linked to an analysis of paraeducator functions that require more complex skills and knowledge to carry out assigned tasks.

The level 2 scopes of responsibilities applies to paraeducators who work in pre-school programs, elementary, general, and special education including remedial and compensatory programs. For the most part, these are paraeducators who work under the direct supervision of one teacher/provider.

There are two major distinctions in the roles of level 1 and 2 paraeducator positions. The first is that there is a greater emphasis on instructional roles for level 2 paraeducators. The second is that while level 2 paraeducators assist teachers/providers with functional (informal) assessment activities, level 1 paraeducators do not. Moreover, level 2 paraeducators also participate in regularly scheduled meetings with teachers/providers and, when required, other members of program implementation teams, while level 1 paraeducators usually do not.

There are also several distinctions in the roles of levels 2 and 3 paraeducator positions. The first is that level 3 paraeducators, who facilitate the inclusion of learners with disabilities into general education, usually work alongside of more than one teacher/provider. The same is true for paraeducators who work in ESL/bilingual, Title I, transition services programs for learners who are moving from school into the adult world and those who work in home- and center-based early intervention programs. Level 3 paraeducators, including Title I and ESL/bilingual paraeducators as well as those who assist learners with disabilities, have some discretionary authority to modify learning activities that are developed by teachers/providers. In addition, level 3 paraeducators may help teachers/providers to involve families in their child's learning experiences and activities. And, when required by learner needs or program requirements, level 3 paraeducators participate in IEP, ITP and IFSP team meetings. Level 3 paraeducators may also participate in both formal (standardized) and functional (informal) assessment activities based on district/agency policy and their qualifications to carry out these tasks. And, because State and local policies connected with documenting and maintaining learner records are becoming more demanding, level 3 paraeducators assist teachers/providers with these activities.

XI - SCOPES OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PARAEDUCATORS IN PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS

RESPONSIBILITY 1: PARAEDUCATORS ASSIST TEACHERS/PROVIDERS WITH BUILDING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE TEAMS.

LEVEL 1
The scope of responsibilities for **level 1** paraeducators as team members includes:

1. Carrying out team decisions as assigned by the teacher/provider.

2. Sharing relevant information with other team members to facilitate problem solving, decision making, program planning, and other team activities.

LEVEL 2
The scope of responsibilities for **level 2** paraeducators as team members includes all of the responsibilities of level 1 paraeducators as team members above plus:

3. Participating in regularly scheduled meetings with teachers/providers.

4. Assisting teachers/providers in activities that engage children and youth in learning experiences.

LEVEL 3
The scope of responsibilities for **level 3** paraeducators as team members includes all of the responsibilities for level 1 and 2 paraeducators as team members above, plus:

5. Participating in meetings with teachers/providers to assist with planning and organizing learning experiences and environments.

6. Attending program planning team meetings, based on program/district/agency policies, to assist with developing individualized education, transition, and family service plans for children and youth who have disabilities and other special needs.

RESPONSIBILITY 2: PARAEDUCATORS ASSIST TEACHERS/PROVIDERS WITH MAINTAINING LEARNER-CENTERED, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS.

LEVEL 1
The scope of responsibilities for **level 1** paraeducators includes:

1. Assisting teachers/providers with the implementation of district/agency policies and procedures for protecting the safety, health, and well-being of learners and staff.

2. Implementing strategies, developed by teachers/providers, that maintain supportive and inclusive environments, respect individual differences among learners, their families, and school/agency staff, and protect the human and legal rights of all individuals.

LEVEL 2
The scope of responsibilities for **level 2** paraeducators includes all of the responsibilities for level 1 paraeducators above.

LEVEL 3
The scope of responsibilities for **level 3** paraeducators includes all of the responsibilities for level 1 and 2 paraeducators above plus:

3. Assisting teachers/providers with involving families in their child's learning experiences.

RESPONSIBILITY 3: PARAEDUCATORS ASSIST TEACHERS/PROVIDERS WITH PLANNING AND ORGANIZING LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

LEVEL 1
The scope of responsibilities for **level 1** paraeducators includes:

1. Duplicating learning materials and resources.

LEVEL 2
The scope of responsibilities for **level 2** paraeducators includes all of the responsibilities for level 1 paraeducators above plus:

2. Gathering and sharing relevant information, that supports the planning process, about the performance and behavior of individual learners.

3. Assisting teachers/providers with the preparation of instructional/learning resources and other materials.

LEVEL 3
The scope of responsibilities for **level 3** paraeducators includes all of the responsibilities for level 1 and 2 paraeducators above, plus:

4. Assisting teachers/providers to modify learning strategies to accommodate different learning styles, ability levels, and other learning needs of individual children and youth.

5. Assisting teachers/providers with the development/preparation of instructional/learning resources and other materials.

6. Inventorying supplies and ordering materials selected by the teacher/provider.

RESPONSIBILITY 4: PARAEDUCATORS ASSIST TEACHERS/PROVIDERS WITH ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

LEVEL 1
The scope of responsibilities for **level 1** paraeducators includes:

1. Using lesson plans and learning strategies developed by teachers/providers.

2. Reviewing and reinforcing learning activities initiated by the teacher/provider to help children and youth master concepts and skills.

3. Performing monitoring duties as assigned in other learning environments (e.g., lunchrooms, playgrounds, libraries, and buses).

LEVEL 2
The scope of responsibilities for **level 2** paraeducators includes all of the responsibilities for level 1 paraeducators above plus:

4. Implementing behavioral programs developed by teachers/providers.

5. Assisting children and youth with individualized learning activities and/or independent study projects developed by teachers/providers.

LEVEL 3
The scope of responsibilities for **level 3** paraeducators includes all of the responsibilities for level 1 and 2 paraeducators above, plus:

6. Carrying out learning activities for children, youth, and their families in homes, work sites, and other community-based settings.

7. Assisting occupational and physical therapists, speech language pathologists, and nurses in the delivery of related services.

RESPONSIBILITY 5: PARAEDUCATORS ASSIST TEACHERS/PROVIDERS WITH ASSESSING LEARNER NEEDS AND PROGRESS/ACHIEVEMENTS.

LEVEL 1
Level 1 paraeducators do not participate in learner assessment activities.

LEVEL 2
The scope of responsibility for **level 2** paraeducators includes:

1. Carrying out functional (informal) assessment activities to assist teachers/providers in documenting information about learner strengths and needs.

LEVEL 3
The scope of responsibilities for **level 3** paraeducators includes all of the responsibilities for level 2 paraeducators above, plus:

2. Administering standardized tests based on the paraeducator's qualifications to carry out the assigned tasks.

3. Assisting teachers/providers and other team members with maintaining learner records required by the district/agency/State.

RESPONSIBILITY 6: PARAEDUCATORS MEET STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL CONDUCT.

LEVELS 1, 2, and 3
The scope of responsibilities for **level 1, 2 and 3** paraeducators includes:

1. Assisting school/agency administrators and teacher/providers with protection of the civil, legal, and human rights of children, youth, and their families.

2. Practicing the standards of professional and ethical conduct approved by the school district/agency or State guidelines for education and/or human services personnel.

3. Performing tasks that are within an identified scope of responsibility for paraeducators in different position levels.

4. Following the chain of command established by the district/agency to address policy questions, systems issues, and personnel practices.

5. Following guidelines established by the district/agency to protect the health, safety, and well-being of children and youth.

6. Respecting individual differences among children, youth, their families, and school/agency personnel.

7. Participating with administrators and other stakeholders in creating and implementing comprehensive systems of professional development for paraeducators.

8. Participating in continuing professional development.

XII - STANDARDS FOR PARAEDUCATOR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL COMPETENCIES

STANDARD 1: TO SERVE AS MEMBERS OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS, PARAEDUCATORS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL COMPETENCIES:

I. Knowledge competencies

LEVEL 1 PARAEDUCATORS

K1 Understanding of the value of a team approach to the delivery of education and related services for learners and their families.

K2 Understanding of the distinctions in teacher/provider and administrator roles in the employment, supervision, management, evaluation, and preparation of paraeducators.

K3 Awareness of Federal, State, and district/agency policies, regulations, and practices connected with paraeducator employment, roles, supervision, and preparation.

K4 Awareness of interactive techniques that contribute to effective participation in program implementation teams.

LEVEL 2 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Level 1 above, plus:

K5 Understanding of the distinctions in the roles and responsibilities of teachers/providers, families, paraeducators, and other team members in identifying learner needs, developing plans to meet learner needs, and implementing programs to achieve learner goals.

LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Levels 1 and 2 above, plus:

K6 Awareness of problem-solving and decision-making strategies that strengthen program planning teams and program implementation teams.

II. Skill Competencies

LEVEL 1 PARAEDUCATORS

S1 Ability to follow teacher/provider instructions and carry out team decisions.

S2 Ability to interact constructively with and demonstrate respect for learners, families, and other school/agency personnel.

LEVEL 2 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Level 1 above, plus:

S3 Ability to contribute relevant objective information to teachers/providers to facilitate planning, problem solving, and decision making.

LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Levels 1 and 2 above, plus:

S4 Ability to participate in program planning team meetings, when required by program or district/agency policies and procedures, to prepare individual education and transition plans (IEPs/ITPs) for school-age students who have disabilities or individual family service plans (IFSPs) for young children and their parents.

STANDARD 2: TO ASSIST TEACHERS/PROVIDERS IN MAINTAINING LEARNER-CENTERED, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS, PARAEDUCATORS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

I. Knowledge competencies

LEVEL 1 PARAEDUCATORS

K1 Understanding of the value of serving all children and youth in supportive, inclusive learning environments.

K2 Understanding of the distinctions and similarities in teacher/provider and paraeducator roles and responsibilities for creating and maintaining supportive and inclusive learning environments.

K3 Awareness of district/agency procedures for protecting the safety, health, and well-being of learners and staff.

K4 Awareness of district/agency and/or State and local laws, policies, and procedures for reporting suspected physical, sexual, and psychological child abuse.

K5 Awareness of district/agency policies and procedures for managing and disciplining all children and youth.

K6 Awareness of district policies, procedures and methods for managing learner behaviors that are disruptive and/or aggressive.

LEVEL 2 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Level 1 above

LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Levels 1 and 2 above, plus:

K7 Awareness of distinctions in teacher/provider and paraeducator roles in involving families in their child's learning experiences.

K8 Understanding of strategies that support families, strengthen their ability to assist their child with learning activities, and encourage participation in the learning environment.

II. Skill competencies

LEVEL 1 PARAEDUCATORS

S1 Ability to implement proactive behavior and learning strategies developed by teachers/providers that maintain supportive and inclusive learning environments.

S2 Ability to follow and use prescribed district/agency policies and procedures to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of learners and staff.

S3 Ability to use universal health precautions for preventing illnesses and infections and proper body mechanics for lifting learners and heavy objects.

LEVEL 2 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Level 1 above, plus:

S4 Ability to perform emergency first aid procedures and CPR.

LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Levels 1 and 2 above, plus:

S5 Ability to carry out teacher/provider plans to enhance family interactions with infants/young children that facilitate physical, social, language, and cognitive development, and share information about community support services and resources.

S6 Ability to carry out teacher/provider plans to support and share information with families about community services and resources available to students making the transition to the workforce, post-secondary education, and the adult world.

S7 Ability to provide translation services for families with limited English proficiency and follow teacher/provider plans to support and encourage family participation in their child's learning environment.

STANDARD 3: TO ASSIST TEACHERS/PROVIDERS WITH PLANNING AND ORGANIZING LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ENVIRONMENTS, PARAEDUCATORS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

I. Knowledge competencies

LEVEL 1 PARAEDUCATORS

K1 Understanding of the value of organized environments to facilitate transitions and promote learning.

K2 Awareness of resources and equipment for duplicating and preparing learning materials developed by teachers/providers.

LEVEL 2 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Level 1 above, plus:

K3 Understanding of the distinctions in teacher/provider and paraeducator roles in developing curriculum content, learning strategies, and modifying learning programs to meet the needs of individual and groups of children and youth.

LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Levels 1 and 2 above, plus:

K4 Understanding of district/agency or school procedures for ordering materials and maintaining accurate records.

II. Skill competencies

LEVEL 1 PARAEDUCATORS

S1 Ability to use copy machines, computers, and other equipment to prepare learning materials and resources.

S2 Ability to use adaptive equipment and assistive technology prescribed by teachers/providers and other professional practitioners.

LEVEL 2 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Level 1 above, plus:

S3 Ability to assist PTs, OTs, SLPs, and nurses to maintain adaptive equipment.

S4 Ability to objectively gather and report relevant information about learners to assist the planning process.

LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Levels 1 and 2 above, plus:

S5 Ability to assist teachers/providers with modifying learning materials and activities to meet the needs of individuals with different ability levels, learning styles, or language backgrounds.

S6 Ability to inventory supplies, order materials as directed by teachers/providers, and maintain accurate records.

STANDARD 4: TO ASSIST TEACHERS/PROVIDERS IN ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN LEARNING EXPERIENCES, PARAEDUCATORS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL COMPETENCIES:

I. Knowledge competencies

LEVEL 1 PARAEDUCATORS

K1 Understanding of the rationale, mission, philosophy, and goals of the program to which the paraeducator is assigned.

K2 Proficiency in basic reading, math, and writing.

K3 Awareness of the distinctions in teacher/provider and paraeducator roles in engaging children and youth in learning experiences.

K4 Understanding of the distinctions in the roles and responsibilities of teachers/providers and paraeducators in the development and implementation of behavior intervention plans.

K5 Awareness of different methods that are used by teachers/providers to accommodate an individual's learning needs.

K6 Awareness of developmentally and age-appropriate reinforcement techniques that facilitate the learning of children and youth with different needs.

K7 Understanding of State and district rules and procedural safeguards regarding the management of behaviors of individual learners.

K8 Understanding of basic principles of proactive behavior management strategies that increase learner independence, motivation, and self-esteem.

K9 Understanding of effective strategies for dealing with verbal aggression and other forms of resistance.

K10 Understanding of how the purposeful utilization of technology can promote learning.

LEVEL 2 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Level 1 above, <u>plus</u>:

K11 Understanding of different strategies used by teachers/providers to support learners who come from different ethnic, cultural, and language minority backgrounds.

K12 Proficiency in English and, if required by program/learner needs, other languages.

K13 Understanding of how various assistive and adaptive devices and materials facilitate learning and inclusion for children and youth with developmental, physical, and sensory disabilities and those who are medically fragile.

K14 Proficiency in academic/curriculum areas based on learner and program needs.

K15 Awareness of patterns of cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and language development typically achieved at different ages and factors that prohibit or impede typical development.

K16 Awareness of the impact of different learning styles/preferences on the performance of individual children and youth.

LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Levels 1 and 2 above, plus:

K17 Understanding of the purpose and need for learning and performance standards.

K18 Understanding of validated practices for working with individuals with severe and challenging behaviors.

II. Skill competencies

LEVEL 1 PARAPROFESSIONALS

S1 Ability to develop and maintain effective interactions with all learners.

S2 Ability to carry out teacher/provider-developed proactive behavioral strategies.

S3 Ability to use developmentally- and age-appropriate reinforcement and other learning activities developed by teachers/providers.

S4 Ability to use teacher/provider-developed positive behavioral strategies and procedures that facilitate the learning of children and youth with challenging behaviors.

S5 Ability to use computers and other technology in a purposeful manner to facilitate learning.

S6 Ability to monitor and assist children and youth in other learning environments (e.g., libraries, computer labs, lunchrooms, playgrounds, and buses).

LEVEL 2 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Level 1 above, plus:

S7 Ability to carry out teacher/provider-developed behavioral strategies that increase learner independence, motivation, and self-esteem.

S8 Ability to use teacher/provider-developed behavioral strategies and procedures that facilitate the learning of children and youth with challenging behaviors.

S9 Ability to follow and carry out teacher/provider plans for strengthening academic skills for school-age learners.

S10 Ability to carry out teacher/provider plans for developmentally appropriate learning activities for infants and children.

S11 Ability to preview lessons in native languages to ensure that English language learners understand instructions and concepts.

S12 Ability to use teacher/provider-developed learning strategies for English language learners.

S13 Ability (based on State and local policies) to assist nurses with administering medications and carry out tube feedings, catherization, and other procedures required by learners who have special health care needs.

LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Levels 1 and 2 above, plus:

S14 Ability to assist teachers/providers in implementing advanced behavioral strategies to facilitate learning of children and youth with challenging behaviors and promote an orderly and safe learning environment for all.

S15 Ability to carry out teacher/provider plans in community-based vocational and transitional programs for students entering the workforce.

S16 Ability to carry out teacher/provider plans in home- and center-based environments that support families of infants and toddlers with disabilities and increase their ability to interact with their child.

S17 Ability to assist physical and occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists with the delivery of related services based on the qualifications of the paraeducators to carry out their assigned tasks.

STANDARD 5: TO ASSIST TEACHERS/PROVIDERS WITH ASSESSING LEARNER NEEDS, PROGRESS, AND ACHIEVEMENTS, PARAEDUCATORS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL COMPETENCIES:

I. Knowledge competencies

LEVEL 1 PARAEDUCATORS

Level 1 paraeducators are not involved in learner assessment activities.

LEVEL 2 PARAEDUCATORS

K1 Awareness of the distinctions in the roles of teachers/providers, other licensed district/agency professionals, and paraeducators in the assessment process.

K2 Awareness of the reasons for conducting different types of evaluations to assess learner strengths and needs.

K3 Understanding of the differences in the goals and objectives of standardized (formal) assessment instruments and teacher/provider-developed functional (informal) assessment tools.

LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Level 2 above, plus:

K4 Awareness of district policies and procedures for maintaining learner records required by the district/agency/State.

III. Skill competencies

LEVEL 1 PARAEDUCATORS

Level 1 paraeducators are not involved in learner assessment activities.

LEVEL 2 PARAEDUCATORS

S1 Ability to use functional (informal) assessment instruments developed by teachers/providers to document and maintain data on learner behaviors and performance and to objectively report the results.

LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATORS—all of Level 2 above, plus:

S2 Ability to administer standardized tests based on State/district/agency policies, the protocol for conducting the test, and the paraeducator's qualifications for carrying out the task.

S3 Ability to assist teachers/providers in conducting functional behavioral analysis.

S4 Ability to assist teachers/providers in maintaining the learner records required by the district/agency/State.

STANDARD 6: TO MEET STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL CONDUCT, PARAEDUCATORS DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLOWING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL COMPETENCIES:

I. Knowledge competencies

LEVEL 1, 2, AND 3 PARAEDUCATORS

K1 Understanding of the civil, legal, and human rights of children, youth, and their families.

K2 Awareness of district/agency standards for professional and ethical conduct for all personnel.

K3 Awareness of the district's/agency's chain of command for decision making and addressing policy questions, systems issues, and personnel practices.

K4 Understanding of the district's/agency's guidelines for protecting the health, safety, and well-being of children and youth.

K5 Awareness of and sensitivity to diversity and individual differences among learners, their families, and school/agency personnel.

K6 Awareness of opportunities for professional growth and career advancement for paraeducators.

II. Skill competencies

LEVEL 1, 2, AND 3 PARAEDUCATORS

S1 Ability to perform assigned tasks under the supervision of teachers/providers in a manner consistent with professional and ethical guidelines established by the State or district/agency.

S2 Willingness to participate in professional and career development opportunities.

S3 Ability to confer with principals/administrators and supervising teachers/providers to identify strengths and professional development needs.

XIII - JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The model job descriptions presented in this section incorporate the distinctions contained in the scopes of responsibilities for the three levels of paraeducator positions. They recognize the hierarchy of knowledge and skills paraeducators must master to advance through the different levels and they also designate supervisory responsibility.

Level 1 paraeducator responsibilities emphasize monitoring learners in different settings, preparing materials, maintaining learning centers, and assisting teachers/providers to provide supportive, safe, and healthy learning environments.

The descriptions for **Level 2** paraeducator positions places greater emphasis on the instructional responsibilities of paraeducators. There are two descriptions for **Level 2** paraeducator positions. The first is for paraeducators employed in programs serving school-age students. The second is for paraeducators employed in pre-school programs provided by LEAs or other agencies that provide education and other services to young children and/or their families.

There are also two descriptions for **Level 3** paraeducator positions. They, too, designate supervisory responsibility. The descriptions recognize the differences in the hierarchy of skills required by paraeducators who are active participants in all phases of the learning process, who may also assist with the delivery of related services for children and youth with special needs and who may carry out teacher/provider plans for engaging families in their child's learning experience.

PARAEDUCATOR JOB DESCRIPTION – LEVEL 1

Supervisory Responsibility: Level 1 paraeducators may work under the direction of one or more teachers/providers. The individual teachers/providers will be responsible for planning the tasks that the paraeducator will perform while s/he is assigned to the teacher's/provider's program area. The teacher/provider will monitor the paraeducator's performance and will share relevant information with the principal/agency administrator.

Position Overview: Level 1 paraeducators do not act independently nor do they participate in the planning of learning experiences or assist with assessment activities. Their responsibilities include escorting and monitoring learners, preparing materials and learning centers, maintaining supportive, safe, and healthy learning environments, and reinforcing learning experiences introduced by teachers/providers.

Employment/Experiential Requirements: New Level 1 paraeducators will have a high school diploma or a G.E.D. The district/agency will provide them with orientation training that explains the distinctions in teacher/provider and paraeducator roles, defines their responsibilities, and describes policies and procedures for assisting teachers/providers to maintain supportive, inclusive, safe, and healthy learning environments. Throughout their first year, the district/agency will provide them with competency-based, systematic inservice training that will enable Level 1 paraeducators to master the core knowledge and skills required by all paraeducators.

Duties for Level 1 paraeducators may include:

- Bus duty (assisting drivers with managing learner behavior and maintaining their safety).
- Escorting learners to different learning environments.
- Monitoring playgrounds, lunchrooms, hallways, and study halls.
- Preparing learning materials and maintaining learning centers.
- Assisting learners with personal and hygienic care.
- Assisting teachers/providers in maintaining supportive learning environments that protect the safety, health, and well-being of learners and staff.
- Reinforcing learning experiences planned and introduced by teachers/providers.

Criteria for Advancement: To advance to a Level 2 position, the paraeducator will demonstrate mastery of the minimum knowledge and skill standards established by the district/agency or State for a Level 2 position. The paraeducator may demonstrate proficiency by successfully completing professional development courses offered by the district/agency, a certificate program developed by a community college, or maintaining a portfolio that documents skills that meet State or local standards. These skills may be documented during interviews, in writing, or on the job.

INSTRUCTIONAL PARAEDUCATOR LEVEL 2 POSITION

Supervisory Responsibility: Level 2 paraeducators working in programs for school-age learners may work under the supervision of teachers, librarians, or, in some cases, speech language pathologists or occupational or physical therapists. In addition to planning paraeducator tasks and determining which learners the paraeducator will work with, the teacher/provider also provides on-the-job training for the paraeducator, monitors the day-to-day performance of the paraeducator, and shares relevant information about the paraeducator's strengths and training needs with principals or agency administrators.

Position Overview: The tasks performed by Level 2 paraeducators are primarily instructional in nature. Depending on State or district policy, paraeducators in Level 2 positions may have limited decision-making authority with regard to non-instructional learning activities. They may assist teachers/providers with functional (informal) assessment activities and they may participate in meetings with teachers to plan learning activities. They do not modify curriculum content and learning activities for individual students unless it is done in consultation with the teacher/provider.

Education Criteria for Employment: New Level 2 paraeducators will have a high school diploma or a G.E.D. and should have completed or be enrolled in a one-year certificate program

developed by a community college to meet State and/or local standards or participate in a competency-based professional development program provided by the district.

Responsibilities for school-based Level 2 paraeducators may include:

- Instructing individual or small groups of learners following lesson plans developed by the teacher.
- Assisting individual learners with supplementary/independent study projects as assigned by the teacher.
- Assisting the teacher with functional (informal) assessment activities.
- Preparing learning/instructional material and bulletin boards and maintaining learning centers.
- Assisting teachers to provide supportive learning environments that facilitate inclusion of learners with diverse learning needs and protect the safety, health, and well-being of learners and staff.
- Participating in regularly scheduled teacher and paraeducator meetings that may also include other team members.
- Maintaining, as directed by an occupational or physical therapist, nurse, or speech-language pathologist, adaptive equipment required by learners with physical and sensory disabilities, or health related needs.

Criteria For Advancement or Employment: To advance to a Level 3 position, the paraeducator will demonstrate mastery of the minimum knowledge and skill competencies established by the district/agency or State standards or a licensure/credentialing system for Level 3 instructional paraeducator positions. The paraeducator may demonstrate proficiency by successfully completing professional development courses offered by the district or a community college AA degree that meets the competency standards for a Level 3 paraeducator or by maintaining a portfolio that documents skills that meet State or local standards established for advancement to a Level 3 paraeducator position. The skills may be documented during interviews, in writing, or on-the-job.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PARAEDUCATOR LEVEL 2 POSITION

Supervisory Responsibility: Level 2 paraeducators working in early childhood education programs administered by LEAs or other provider agencies are supervised by early childhood specialists (teachers/providers). In addition to planning paraeducator tasks and determining the learners with whom the paraeducators will work, the teacher/provider also provides on-the-job training for the paraeducator, monitors the day-to-day performance of the paraeducator, and shares relevant information about the paraeducator's strengths and training needs with principals or agency administrators.

Position Overview: Level 2 paraeducators working in pre-school and early elementary classrooms and other center-based childhood education programs assist teachers/providers in various learning activities for individuals and small groups. Depending on State or district policy, they may also have limited decision-making authority with regard to non-instructional activities.

Education Criteria for Employment: The education requirements for new Level 2 paraeducators working in early childhood environments are the same as those for paraeducators working with school-age students with one exception. They must participate in programs specifically designed to prepare them to work with infants, toddlers, and young children.

Responsibilities for Level 2 paraeducators who work in school/center-based early childhood education settings may include:

- Assisting teachers/providers with functional assessment activities to determine a child's developmental level and learning needs.
- Using strategies prepared by teachers/providers to facilitate the development of social and communication skills, self-esteem, creativity, and self-reliance through play and other age-appropriate activities.
- Assisting teachers/providers to provide supportive learning environments that facilitate inclusion of learners with diverse needs and protect the safety, health, and well-being of children and staff.
- Assisting with the preparation of learning materials.
- Organizing learning centers.

Criteria For Advancement To Level 3: To advance to a Level 3 position, the paraeducator will demonstrate mastery of the minimum knowledge and skill competencies established by the district or State standards or a licensure/credentialing system for Level 3 early childhood paraeducator positions. The paraeducator may demonstrate proficiency by successfully completing professional development courses offered by the district or a community college AA degree in early childhood education that meets the competency standards for a Level 3 paraeducator or by maintaining a portfolio that documents skills that meet State or local standards established for advancement to a Level 3 paraeducator position. The skills may be documented during interviews, in writing or on-the-job.

LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATOR POSITIONS

Supervisory Responsibility: Level 3 paraeducators may work with more than one teacher/provider (e.g., early childhood specialists, transition specialists, OTs, PTs, SLPs, Title 1, ESL/bilingual teachers, or general and special education teachers). It is, however, more efficient if one person is designated to be the primary supervisor. The designated supervisor's responsibilities should include planning and coordinating the development of a paraeducator's work plan in cooperation with other team members, monitoring the paraeducator's performance,

providing on-the-job training, and sharing information with principals/administrators about paraeducator strengths and training needs.

Position Overview: There are fewer restrictions on the participation of Level 3 paraeducators in all phases of the learning process. Level 3 paraeducators engage learners and their families in activities *developed by teachers/providers* that 1) strengthen physical, social, cognitive, and social development, 2) increase mastery of academic skills, 3) support English language learners, 4) assist in both functional and standardized assessment activities, 5) expand family participation in their child's learning experiences, and 6) provide learning experiences in homes, vocational, and other community environments. The model job descriptions for level 3 positions that follow are divided into two program areas. They include: early intervention/childhood and various programs serving elementary, middle, and high school students who have different ability levels and learning preferences, limited English, physical and sensory disabilities, and special health care needs.

Education Criteria for Employment in Level 3 Positions: Paraeducators may advance to Level 3 positions by successfully meeting standards established by the district/agency for advancement. Or new employees must have completed or be enrolled in an AA degree program developed by a community college to meet State or district/agency standards.

EARLY INTEREVENTION/CHILDHOOD LEVEL 3 PARAEDUCATOR POSITION

Responsibilities for Level 3 paraeducators who work in center/home-based early intervention/childhood programs may include:

- Consulting with teachers/providers during regularly scheduled meetings to share information that will facilitate the planning of learning experiences for individuals and groups of children.
- Documenting data using functional assessment instruments developed by teachers/providers to assess learner needs.
- Implementing decisions made by program implementation teams that may include engaging infants, toddlers, and young children in developmentally appropriate activities.
- Assisting families to participate in their child's learning experiences and environments and providing families with information and assistance that they can use to gain access to community resources and services.
- Participating in meetings of IFSP/IEP planning teams as required by learner needs.

INSTRUCTIONAL PARAEDUCATOR LEVEL 3 POSITION

Responsibilities for Level 3 paraeducators who work in programs serving school-age learners (i.e. inclusive general and special education, Title I, bilingual/ESL and other compensatory or remedial programs) may include:

- Consulting with teachers during regularly scheduled meetings to share information that will facilitate the planning of learning experiences for individual or groups of students with disabilities, English language limitations, or other learning needs that may place learners at risk.

- Administering standardized assessment instruments scored and analyzed by teachers or other professional practitioners.

- Participating in functional (informal) assessment activities to assist teachers/providers with assessing learner needs.

- Implementing lesson and other plans developed by teachers/providers to increase academic skills and the development of social and communication skills, self-esteem, and self reliance.

- Modifying curriculum and instructional activities for individual learners, under the direction of teachers/providers.

- Assisting teachers to engage families in their child's learning experiences.

- Supervising students in community-based learning environments to prepare them to make the transition from school to work and to participate in the adult world (if required by learner or program needs).

- Familiarizing employers and other members of the community with the needs of individual learners (if required by the program or learner needs).

- Assisting occupational and physical therapists, speech language pathologists, and nurses to provide related services (if required by learner or program needs).

- Assisting teachers/providers to maintain learner records required by the State/district/agency.

- Participating in IEP, ITP, and IFSP planning team meetings as required by learner needs.

XIV - ASSESSING TEACHER/PROVIDER–PARAEDUCATOR TEAM PERFORMANCE

In the previous sections we presented 1) guidelines for teacher/provider and paraeducator scopes of responsibilities 2) standards for teacher/provider and paraeducator knowledge and skill competencies, and 3) model job descriptions for paraeducators.

The purpose of this section is to provide administrators, supervisors, and personnel developers with model performance indicators that they can build on to document how effectively team members perform tasks within their scopes of responsibility.

Using performance indicators that relate to skill standards is an effective mechanism for objectively determining how well tasks are performed and whether or not an individual has mastered required competencies. The performance indicators developed for teachers relate directly to their supervisory responsibilities. The paraeducator performance indicators address all of the competency areas. We have tried to develop indicators that are concrete, yet flexible enough to be used in different learning programs. We did not develop a performance indicator for every skill that a teacher/provider or paraeducator might be expected to perform as part of their team roles. The model indicators that follow are designed to provide guidelines that school districts/agencies can use to develop performance indicators after they have established their own skill standards for different positions.

In addition to standardized indicators, evaluation systems must also include the following procedures:

- Job requirements and skills to be evaluated must be clearly defined and communicated to all team members.
- Skills to be assessed must be observable and measurable.
- Methods for demonstrating skill mastery must be developed. (They may include a high school diploma or a GED proficiency test, successful completion of a post-secondary personnel development program, written or oral examinations, on-the-job observations, and a portfolio of documented skills.)
- Results of evaluation activities must be shared with the individual and plans developed to strengthen required skills.

To develop the paraeducator performance standards, we consulted The *Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills* (SCANS) and several other U.S. Department of Labor publications concerned with ensuring the availability of a skilled workforce. The SCANS served as a foundation for the development of indicators to assess basic reading, math, and writing skills for paraeducators. We also compared our model performance indicators with those developed by the Washington State Community College Skill Standards for Paraeducators, the Rhode Island State Department of Education, and the American Federation of Teachers' Paraprofessional and School-Related Personnel Division.

XV - TEACHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Effective teacher/provider team leaders who supervise paraeducators demonstrate the ability to plan work assignments, provide on-the-job training, monitor performance and share relevant information with principals/agency administrators about paraeducator performance. The following performance indicators are designed to assess the skills that teachers require to effectively integrate paraeducators into the learning process.

The teacher/provider:

1. Demonstrates awareness of distinctions in teacher/provider and paraeducator roles.

2. Plans assignments for paraeducators based on their qualifications and identified ability to perform a specific task.

3. Models standards for professional and ethical conduct for paraeducators.

4. Develops paraeducator work plans that specify the individual(s) or groups that the paraeducator will assist and describe the learning/behavior management strategies that the paraeducator will use, the materials/equipment required to perform the task, where the activity will occur, and how information on learner performance will be documented and shared with teachers/providers.

5. Communicates methods the team will use to maintain supportive, safe, and healthy environments for learners and staff.

6. Develops plans for paraeducator interaction with families that include: how contacts with the families will be made; what services will be provided; where and when they will occur; the information, resources, and equipment required to perform the task; and how information about the results of the contact will be documented and shared with the teacher/provider.

7. Monitors paraeducator performance, using standards/indicators developed by the district/agency.

8. Provides feedback/on-the-job training to strengthen a paraeducator's ability to carry out teacher/provider plans.

9. Uses interactive/communication skills that demonstrate respect for and recognition of how cultural and other individual differences influence paraeducator actions and performance.

10. Acknowledges and responds to differences of opinion constructively and with respect.

11. Shares relevant information about paraeducator strengths and learning needs objectively with principals/agency administrators.

XVI - PARAEDUCATOR PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Effective paraeducators demonstrate an understanding of distinctions in the roles of all team members and participate in various elements of the learning process based on their qualifications to assist teachers with different tasks. The model indicators for assessing paraeducator performance are related to the six responsibility and skill standards areas for different position levels. These indicators are meant to serve as guidelines and, therefore, do not include all of the tasks that a paraeducator may perform.

RESPONSIBILITY AND STANDARD AREA 1: TEAM PARTICIPATION

The paraeducator:

1. Follows teacher/provider instructions for carrying out an assigned task.

2. Asks for clarification of instructions that are not fully understood.

3. Shares information objectively about learners and their families with teachers/providers.

4. Uses communication and other interactive skills that demonstrate respect for and recognize the impact culture may have on the actions of other staff, learners, and families.

5. Responds to differences of opinions among team members with openness and respect.

6. Responds appropriately to feedback about performance.

RESPONSIBILITY AND STANDARD AREA 2: PROVIDING LEARNER-CENTERED ENVIRONMENTS

The paraeducator:

1. Implements all district/agency procedures for protecting the safety and health of learners and staff.

2. Uses universal health precautions and proper body mechanics for lifting learners and heavy objects.

3. Follows teacher/provider plans for engaging families in their child's learning activities and environment.

4. Interacts appropriately with families.

5. Shares information with families about services and resources that implement team decisions

6. Documents results of family interactions thoroughly and objectively.

7. Maintains confidentiality of information about learners and families by sharing it only with appropriate team members.

RESPONSIBILITY AND STANDARD AREA 3: PLANNING AND ORGANIZING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The paraeducator:

1. Prepares materials and learning centers before an activity is scheduled to begin.

2. Prepares materials following teacher/provider instructions.

3. Uses copy machines, computers, and other equipment appropriately and correctly.

4. Uses adaptive equipment and assistive technology as prescribed by teachers/providers.

5. Modifies, in consultation with teachers/providers, learning activities and materials to accommodate individual needs.

6. Shares relevant information with teachers/providers that assist the planning process.

RESPONSIBILITY AND STANDARD AREA 4: ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The paraeducator:

1. Develops and maintains effective interactions with all learners.

2. Follows teacher/provider plans for strengthening academic skills for individuals and groups.

3. Follows teacher/provider plans and strategies for managing learner behavior.

4. Uses age-appropriate reinforcement strategies.

5. Follows teacher/provider plans and methods that facilitate learning for children and youth with challenging behaviors.

6. Follows teacher/provider plans and methods that facilitate learning for English language learners.

7. Follows teacher/provider plans and methods for providing vocational and other community-based learning experiences.

8. Previews a learning activity to ensure to that individuals and groups understand the objective of the activity.

9. Follows teacher/provider plans and methods that support families and young children in home- and center-based learning environments.

10. Performs learning activities that encourage learners to work independently.

11. Provides assistance, when appropriate, to assure that a learner stays on task.

12. Engages a learner in one activity at a time.

13. Provides clear and concise directions to ensure that a learner understands what is expected.

14. Uses learning activities developed by teachers/providers that accommodate individual needs.

15. Uses learning strategies that support peer interaction among all learners.

16. Documents the results of learning activities and shares relevant information with teachers/providers.

RESPONSIBILITY AND STANDARD AREA 5: ASSESSING LEARNER PERFORMANCE

The paraeducator:

1. Uses teacher/provider-developed functional assessment instruments as directed.

2. Shares results of functional assessment activities objectively with teachers/providers.

3. Scores informal reading, spelling, and math tests accurately.

4. Administers standardized assessment instruments that follow district/agency policies and testing protocols.

5. Accurately documents information about learner performance as required by State or district/agency policy.

6. Accurately completes attendance, truancy, and suspension records following district/agency policies and practices.

7. Files learner information accurately.

RESPONSIBILITY AND STANDARD AREA 6: PRACTICING PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The paraeducator:

1. Performs only tasks that are within the identified scope of responsibilities for paraeducators in a specific position level.

2. Performs assigned tasks under the supervision of teachers/providers in a manner consistent with professional and ethical guidelines established by the State and/or district/agency.

3. Follows work rules and procedures established for district/agency personnel.

4. Maintains confidentiality about all personal information, assessment results, medical history, and other records concerning learners and their families.

5. Follows procedures that protect the safety and well-being of learners and staff.

6. Uses interactive and communication methods that demonstrate respect for cultural diversity and individuality among learners, their families, and staff.

7. Participates in professional and career development opportunities.

In addition to these performance indicators, we are also including indicators of proficiency in reading, math, and writing skills identified by the SCANS report.

READING

The paraeducator:

1. Locates, understands, and interprets written information in prose and documents including manuals, graphs, and schedules in English, and, if required by learner or program needs, in another language.

2. Identifies the main idea or essential message in a text.

3. Identifies relevant details and facts.

4. Infers or locates the meaning of technical vocabulary.

MATHEMATICS

The paraeducator:

1. Performs basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

2. Uses basic numerical concepts such as whole numbers, fractions, percentages, and other techniques for solving practical problems.

3. Uses tables, graphs, diagrams, and charts to obtain and convey information.

WRITING

The paraeducator:

1. Communicates thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing.

2. Records information completely and accurately.

3. Uses language, style, organization, and format appropriate for the subject matter, purpose, and audience.

4. Checks, edits, and revises for accuracy, appropriate emphasis, form, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

As noted earlier, there are multiple ways in which each of the skills that are required by paraeducators may be documented. They include a high school diploma, a GED, or successfully passing recognized assessment instruments, during interviews or on-the-job observations, professional development opportunities provided by the district/agency, or completion of an approved AA degree or certificate program provided by a community college. Whatever performance indicators are used, the paraeducator must be made aware of how they will be used, the results of the assessments, and that they must be linked to the availability of standardized opportunities for professional development that recognize differences in career preferences among the paraeducator workforce.

In the next section we will address different policy and systemic issues connected with developing effective continuing opportunities for paraeducator preparation.

XVII - DEVELOPING POLICIES AND INFRASTRUCTURES FOR STRENGHTHENING TEACHER/PROVIDER-PARAEDUCATOR TEAMS

Developing scopes of responsibilities for teachers/providers and paraeducators that identify distinctions in various positions and establishing knowledge and skill standards is only one part of the process. To ensure that all team members are well prepared to carry out their responsibilities as members of program implementation teams, it is essential that comprehensive systems of professional development that include pre-service and in-service education opportunities be established.

Traditional approaches to professional development for teachers/providers are beginning to change. These changes are occurring in response to the growing recognition that various school reform initiatives cannot succeed unless teachers/providers are prepared for the multitude of challenges that confront them in schools and other learning environments (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Unfortunately, the efforts that have taken place over the last decade to develop new and more effective practices for preparing teachers/providers have overlooked their emerging roles as supervisors of paraeducators. Indeed, these initiatives have not adequately recognized the need for differentiated staffing arrangements that will provide teachers/providers with the human resources necessary to support their expanding program management and administrative functions (Pickett, in Pickett & Gerlach, 1997).

As a result, neither undergraduate nor graduate pre-service programs nor district-centered, school-focused continuing professional development programs are preparing teachers/providers to supervise and work effectively with paraeducators (Pickett, in Pickett & Gerlach, 1997; French & Pickett, 1997).

Moreover, in far too many cases nationwide, standardized and structured professional development and career advancement opportunities for paraeducators are almost non-existent. When they do exist, they are usually highly parochial, do not recognize the similarity in paraeducator responsibilities in different programs and learning environments, and are not competency based. What's more, they are not linked to advancement, either through different levels of paraeducator positions or to the professional ranks, based on career preference (Pickett, 1989; Pickett, 1996; & Pickett, in press).

To address the various issues that are connected with improving the performance of teacher/provider-paraeducator teams is not an easy task. It requires the active participation and commitment of personnel in SEAs, LEAs, IHEs, representatives of professional organizations representing different disciplines, and unions. It is critical that they form partnerships and work in concert to develop infrastructures that will meet the identified needs of teacher/provider-paraeducator teams in their State and locale.

Because all States have licensure/credentialing systems for teachers/providers, it should be somewhat easier to address policy questions and systemic issues that impact on their professional development needs as paraeducator supervisors. Currently, however, only two States, Minnesota and Washington, have incorporated policies in their credentialing systems that

require teachers/providers to be prepared to supervise paraeducators. Rhode Island and Utah have established standards, and Iowa has set guidelines for teacher/provider roles in the supervision of paraeducators. Thus, as SEAs, LEAs, and other provider agencies continue their efforts to establish professional development practices that support ongoing reform initiatives for improving the quality of education and related services for all learners, they need to place the need to develop policies, procedures, and practices that will strengthen the capacity of teachers/providers to supervise paraeducators on the agenda.

The challenges confronting the various stakeholders with responsibility for developing policies and infrastructures for preparing paraeducators to support the various elements of teacher/provider program and administrative functions is far more complex. In most States and locales, it means developing new systems or completely overhauling ones that may not have been evaluated in thirty years.

The traditional approach to paraeducator preparation in most districts/agencies has been to provide a one-day training session once a year at most. Typically, as many as 100-200 paraeducators may be assembled in a school/agency lunchroom to hear from an outside consultant with no ties to the district/agency. The consultant presents a 6-hour workshop usually on the current hot topic and departs. These sessions are rarely appropriate or cost effective because they do not meet the needs of paraeducators. There are several reasons for this. First, the environment does not facilitate learning. Second, the preferred learning styles of adults is not taken into account. And third, because there are no opportunities for continuing skill development and growth, the lessons, if they are learned at all, are soon forgotten.

To ensure the creation of effective comprehensive systems of professional development for paraeducators, issues connected with their preparation must be viewed as integral components of State and local initiatives to restructure and improve professional development programs for all education and related services personnel. To be most effective, professional development opportunities for paraeducators need to incorporate a variety of strategies. They may include a) on-the-job coaching/mentoring provided by teachers/providers to reinforce skills, b) standardized inservice training, and c) formal academic courses combined with practical experience. No matter what learning strategies and practices are incorporated into paraeducator development programs, they must recognize the many ways that adults learn. Figure I, provides an overview of the many factors linked to adult learning.

HOW ADULTS LEARN
(IMPLICATIONS FOR PARAEDUCATOR PREPARATION)

- Adults commit to learning when the goals are realistic and important to them. Therefore, professional development should address areas that paraeducators believe have immediate application in learning environments.

- Adults learn, retain, and use that which they perceive is relevant to their needs. Therefore, professional development must enable paraeducators to see the relationships between what they are learning and their day-to-day activities.

- Adults need to see the results of their efforts and have feedback on how well they are doing. Therefore, professional development should provide opportunities for paraeducators to try out what they are learning and to receive structured feedback.

- Adults are more concrete in the way that they operate than formerly thought. Therefore, paraeducators should have the opportunity for directed experiences in which they apply what they are learning in the work setting.

- Adults who participate in small groups are more likely to move their learning beyond understanding to application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Therefore, professional development for paraeducators should include learning in small groups in which they share, reflect, and generalize their experiences.

- Adults come to learning with a wide range of life experiences, knowledge, interests, and competencies. Therefore, professional development for paraeducators must accommodate this diversity.

- Adults want to be the origin of their own learning. Therefore, professional development opportunities need to give paraeducators some control over the what, why, when, and where of their learning.

- The transfer of learning is not automatic for adults and must be planned and facilitated. Therefore, coaching and other follow-up supports are needed to help paraeducators transfer learning into daily practice.

Figure I: Adapted from Wood and Thompson (1993)

There are several essential policy questions and systemic issues that are central to the conceptualization and implementation of a comprehensive system of professional development for paraeducators that is responsive to their needs. As we noted earlier, these questions cannot be addressed in a vacuum. They require the active participation of SEAs, LEAs, other provider agencies, professional organizations, and unions. Each of these governmental and non-governmental organizations have different, but interrelated, responsibilities for integrating paraeducators into education and related services delivery teams, developing standards for their roles, responsibilities, and supervision, as well as providing opportunities for paraeducator preparation and career advancement. The most critical questions that require the joint attention of policymakers, implementers, personnel developers, and other stakeholders at the State and local levels are presented in Figure II.

KEY POLICY QUESTIONS

- What are the indicators that roles for paraeducators in our State/locale are clearly defined?
- Are there standards for preparing paraeducators to work in different position levels and/or disciplines/programs? Are there opportunities for professional development and career advancement for paraeducators?
- Is there a credentialing system or mechanism for ensuring that paraeducators have the skills that they require? When was the current system established? Has it been revised recently? Is it competency based?
- Are there standards for the supervision of paraeducators? Are the standards part of the State's teacher/provider licensure system? Are teacher/provider education programs developing or revising course content to prepare their graduates to supervise paraeducators?
- What impact do Federal mandates and funding, State reimbursement policies and regulatory procedures, or local collective bargaining agreements have on the employment, training, and supervision of paraeducators?
- What are the current roles of the SEAs, LEAs, two- and four-year IHEs, professional organizations representing different disciplines, unions, and parents in setting standards for paraeducator utilization, professional development, credentialing, and supervision? What barriers exist in our State/locale for the development of standards and systems to improve the performance, supervision, and preparation of paraeducators? What resources are available to facilitate the development and implementation of standards and systems? How can the different constituencies contribute to the efforts to improve the performance of teacher/provider-paraeducator teams? How can we develop and strengthen partnerships among the different constituencies?

Figure II: Adapted from Pickett in Pickett and Gerlach (1997.)

The topics contained in the core curriculum presented in Figure III are designed to serve as a flexible approach for developing course content for district/school/agency paraeducator preparation programs. While the topics for all three levels of paraeducator positions remain the same, new curriculum content and learning activities must be developed to meet the unique needs of paraeducators employed in more advanced positions. The curriculum can also serve as the framework for the development of community college certificates for level 2 paraeducators and AA Degree programs that are established to meet the standards and guidelines for level 3 paraeducator positions. No matter whether formal course work is part of the district/agency paraeducator preparation program or a community college program, there is a powerful need for on-the-job coaching provided by teachers/providers to reinforce and strengthen the skills learned during more structured sessions.

A CORE CURRICULUM FOR PARAEDUCATORS

I. Strengthening the instructional team
- Distinctions in roles and duties of teachers/providers and paraeducators
- Interactive and problem-solving techniques

II. Legal and human rights of learners and families

III. Human growth and development

IV. The learning process
- learning/lesson plans
- IEP/IFSP/ITP's
- Documenting learner performance and other assessment activities
- Maintaining learner centered environments
- Behavior management strategies
- Instructional methods for learners with diverse needs

V. Appreciating diversity

VI. Working with families

VII. Emergency, health, and safety procedures

Figure III

XVIII - CREDENTIALING PROCEDURES FOR PARAEDUCATORS

At the present time, twelve states have established credentialing mechanisms for paraeducators. They range from the Kansas and Maine multi-level certifications/permit systems that define duties, training, and advancement requirements to one-dimensional systems that are not linked to training. Other states have chosen to establish standards for roles and preparation of paraeducators. They include Utah, Rhode Island, Iowa, Minnesota, Washington. Utah, Rhode Island, and Iowa have set standards for paraeducator supervision. Minnesota and Washington have added provisions to their teacher licensure systems that require teachers/providers to be prepared to direct and monitor paraeducators.

Credentialing for paraeducators is not a new idea. It is, however, controversial. Advocates for developing new systems and strengthening existing ones have identified five major reasons for paraeducator certification. Figure IV identifies the benefits that will accrue from paraeducator credentialing systems.

BENEFITS OF PARAEDUCATOR CERTIFICATION

- All learners will be better served and the quality of education and related services will improve with availability of a better-prepared paraeducator workforce.
- Certification for paraeducators will ensure that paraeducators have mastered skills that are required to support and supplement teacher/provider programs and administrative functions.
- Certification will establish clear distinctions in the complexity of the roles and responsibilities that are associated with different paraeducator position levels.
- Certification will establish realistic opportunities for upward mobility through a career pathway for paraeducators.
- Certification will serve as a method for providing recognition to the contributions that paraeducators make to the delivery of education and related services for all learners who can benefit from individualized programs and personalized attention.

Figure IV: Adapted from Pickett (1986)

The Kansas Paraprofessional Permit System is provided here to serve as a model for other States that might be interested in reviewing their credentialing system or developing a new one. In addition, districts/agencies that provide early intervention/childhood services may want to investigate the Childhood Development Associate (CDA) credential for paraeducators who work in early childhood education programs. For information about the CDA credentialing program, contact: The Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, 1341 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005-3105.

THE KANSAS PARAPROFESSIONAL PERMIT SYSTEM

The Kansas Statewide Permit System was developed in the late 1970s in response to a legislative mandate. Although the permit system applies only to paraprofessional personnel employed in special education programs that are administered by local school districts, it can easily be adapted to serve as a credential for paraeducators working in general, compensatory, and early childhood education programs. One of the strengths of the Kansas Permit System is that each of the permit levels is linked to either inservice training or academic credit provided by a community or technical college. The permit defines a "special education paraprofessional" as an employee who is permitted to perform instructional tasks. The possession of a paraprofessional permit indicates that the school district is providing the training necessary for the skills needed by the paraprofessional, or recognizes the academic credits earned by the paraprofessional prior to or after being employed by the district.

The permit levels (I, II, III) define the extent of training that a paraprofessional has had. And allow paraprofessionals to attain proficiency beyond an entry level. The standards and requirements for the individual permit levels are:

LEVEL I The requirements for a Paraprofessional I permit are participation in at least four inservice sessions totaling at least 20 clock hours of inservice training per school year. (The local education agency may choose to substitute all or part of the above requirements with an equivalent amount of appropriate college coursework taken during the school year. Any paraprofessional, without prior experience as an instructional paraprofessional, shall be approved and shall receive a Paraprofessional I permit after participation in 20 clock hours of inservice training.)

LEVEL II The requirements for a Paraprofessional II permit are:

a) two years experience as an instructional paraprofessional;

b) completion of 30 semester college hours of approved academic work, an equivalent of 450 clock hours of approved inservice training, or a combination of the two totaling 450 clock hours; and

c) participation in at least four inservice sessions totaling at least 20 clock hours of inservice training per school year.

LEVEL III The requirements for a Paraprofessional III permit are:

a) three years experience as an instructional paraprofessional;

b) completion of 60 semester college hours of approved academic course work; an AA degree from an approved training program for instructional paraprofessionals; a certificate from an approved training program for instructional paraprofessionals from a vocational technical school; equivalent to 900 clock hours; and

c) participation in at least four inservice sessions totaling at least 20 clock hours of inservice training per school year.

In order to advance to a higher level, a paraprofessional shall document successful completion of the requirements stipulated under each previous permit.

XIX - THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PARAEDUCATOR PREPARATION

The primary focus of this project was to develop guidelines for standards that would serve as resources personnel in SEAs, LEAs, and other provider agencies could build on to improve the performance of teacher/provider and paraeducator teams. In order to create supportive, inclusive, environments that promote learning and higher levels of success for all childrean and youth, all members of program implementation teams, including paraeducators, must be prepared to carry out the tasks that comprise the scope of responsibilities for their positions. Another important reason for addressing paraeducator preparation and career development issues is connected with the demographics of the paraeducator workforce. The vast majority of paraeducators are women who very likely come from the racial, cultural and language minority heritages in their community (Genzuk and Baca, 1998: Genzuk, etal, 1994; and Haselkorn & Fiddler, 1996, RNT, 1997). They are, therefore, a good stable human resource for reducing shortage of teachers/providers.

While SEAs, LEAs, and IHEs across the country are moving forward with collaborative efforts to create new approaches to personnel preparation that link pre-service and continuing professional development opportunities for teachers/providers, this is not happening for paraeducators. There is a powerful need to reassess articulation agreements that currently exist between two- and four-year personnel preparation programs in order to remove barriers to career advancement for paraeducators who want to become teachers/providers. It is also critical at the same time to systematically prepare paraeducators for their evolving roles as members of program implementation teams.

While community colleges have long been recognized as a natural place for programs to prepare paraeducators (especially those who work in positions that require more complex skills), most community colleges have not found a market for their programs. This is directly attributable to two interrelated factors. The first is tied to paraeducator pay scales and the second is the lack of viable career pathways that allow skilled paraeducators to advance to higher levels of paraeducator positions. Thus, there is very little incentive for an individual whose career preference is to continue to work as a paraeducator to enter and complete an AA degree program.

In addition, the terms of articulation agreements that currently exist between two- and four-year personnel preparation programs do not attract paraeducators to a community college program. It is not unusual for paraeducators who do enroll in community college AA degree programs to have two goals. The first is to eventually become a credentialed teacher/provider. And the second, which is usually of equal importance, is to take courses that will increase their capacity to be effective members of program implementation teams. In most cases, however, only liberal arts courses transfer for full credit, and the courses that paraeducators specialize in to improve their on-the-job-performance - early childhood, special, bilingual, reading, and other education classes - transfer as electives. Because of the complexity of curriculum requirements, they frequently have far too many elective credits. Thus, many highly skilled paraeducators find themselves in a position of having to repeat courses and are, therefore, delayed in earning a teacher/provider license in their chosen discipline.

Because so many teacher/provider preparation programs nationwide are in a state of change, this is an ideal time for policymakers, administrators, and faculty in two- and four-year IHEs to reassess these articulation agreements. This is particularly important at a time when teacher/provider preparation programs are initiating proactive strategies to recruit candidates who come from diverse racial, cultural, and language minority heritages.

XX - CONCLUSION

To effectively tap the resources of paraeducators as team members, many factors must be considered in order to develop policies, systems, and guidelines/standards for paraeducator preparation and supervision. First and foremost, decisions about paraeducator roles and responsibilities must be based on the education and related services needs of all learners served by school districts and other provider agencies. The primary goal should be to develop policies and systems that will improve the integration of paraeducators into program implementation teams in order to support and assist teachers/providers to carry out their administrative and programmatic functions and most especially to provide individualized/ personalized services to all children and youth who can benefit from them.

A major theme of the work of this project and the development of the scopes of responsibilities and standards for teacher/provider and paraeducator skills has been the need for SEAs, LEAs, IHEs, professional organizations, and unions to form partnerships to address policy questions. Unless and until this occurs, the issues that influence paraeducator recruitment, performance, preparation, supervision, and retention will never become embedded in district/agency personnel practices and personnel preparation systems. And therefore, training and professional development opportunities for paraeducators will continue to be highly parochial, unstructured, and will not lead to advancement for paraeducators who have diverse career goals. We hope the resources in this report will strengthen the resolve and capacity of various stakeholders to work in concert to find strategies that will address the needs of States and locales.

XXI - REFERENCES

In addition to the references that follow, there are instructional, technical assistance and other resources concerned with career and professional development, administrative issues, and current research available on the web site of the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals. The address is: http://web.gc.cuny.edu/dept/case/nrcp

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